Processed contributions

This summary text incorporates contributions from:

- Belgian Disability Forum vzw (BDF)
- Steunpunt, the Centre for the fight against poverty, insecurity and social exclusion
- ATD Quart Monde Belgique.

Some other contributions are covered in the NGO synthesis text, but are also partly applicable to this text (through a reference in one of the contributions or through the discussion during the SDG Forum):

- Associations 21
- Habitat et Participation
- Luttes Solidarités Travail
- Reset Vlaanderen.

Which SDGs are the partners themselves working on?

- The responses show that the organisations support or promote actions around several SDGs, with some emphases.
  - The BDF works under the principles of 'leaving no one behind', 'connectedness and indivisibility' and 'inclusiveness'. The focus is mainly on SDG 1, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10 and SDG 11. Through various communication channels, the BDF provides information on how the SDGs matter to persons with disabilities.
  - Steunpunt produced an important report on sustainability and poverty. The SDGs provide the framework for this report. The Support Centre has been recognised as an SDG Voice. Important priority SDGs for its own operation are SDG 1 and SDG 10. The various activities of the Steunpunt do otherwise address all SDGs.
  - For ATD, SDG 1 is central to its operations. The organisation refers to an important project that can contribute to the realisation of all SDGs in our country. It is about a participatory research project, in partnership with the University of Oxford. In that project, people in poverty, professionals and university graduates can work together. The aim of this project is to achieve better poverty reduction policies at national and international level. There is not always sufficient understanding of the multidimensionality of poverty.
- Some general elements (from the discussion during the SDG Forum):
  - The discussion highlighted that transition processes in general are often not very inclusive. Not all social groups can participate fully in them. It is often the most vulnerable groups that are hit harder, including by climate change, but who have the least resources to protect themselves from it.

What are priority themes or SDGs for Belgium in implementing the 2030 Agenda?

- Organisations' responses place different emphases.
  - Priority issues include: (1) a drastic increase in the number of affordable and quality housing, (2) support for energy and water savings for low-income families and tenants, (3) a greater supply of quality jobs for the short-skilled, (4) equal educational opportunities. (Steunpunt)
  - Belgium falls short in implementing the 'leave no one behind' principle. Every policy decision should ask whether persons with disabilities have access to this policy or measure. More attention is needed for SDG 1, SDG 3, SDG 4, SDG 5, SDG 8, SDG 10 and SDG 11. In order to achieve a more inclusive society, stronger policies are needed for, among others: combating poverty, inclusive employment, social cohesion, better data, elimination of discrimination in status cohabitants and married couples, accessibility, elimination of the digital divide. (BDF)
  - There is a need for better financing of energy renovation of housing (private and social housing) rented by low-income people. Landlords should be encouraged or obliged to make interventions in the property. Otherwise, prices become too high for tenants and they risk being evicted. (ATD)
  - More attention is needed on the link between just transition and social justice. If this is in place, social justice can become an engine for the equitable transition, which in turn can reduce inequality. The National Just Transition Conference will be an important moment in that regard. (ATD)
  - It is important to see poverty as a consequence of human rights violations and not just the individual responsibility of people in poverty. (ATD)
- Some general elements (from the discussion during the SDG Forum):
  - The housing crisis was discussed very extensively during the discussion. For vulnerable or low-income people, there are real structural problems in the housing market. There are too few affordable and quality homes for those groups. Measures for energy renovation of housing are mainly targeted at middle- and high-income people. Within a neighbourhood, improving the energy quality of individual houses of e.g. owners with a sufficiently high income can cause displacement effects in the neighbourhood, making it even more difficult for low-income people. Something should change in the application of the principle of 'cohabitation'. Now it often works to the detriment of low-income people. Hopefully the VNR will provide an opportunity to arrive at a more coherent inter-federal policy.
  - There was also a general criticism of the Voluntary National Review process as a whole. Not all organisations can participate fully. There is also a problem with too many parallel processes of surveying civil society by the government. This requires far too much energy from organisations that are often already under-resourced.

What issues require changes at European or international level to implement the 2030 Agenda?

- The organisations point to a number of issues:
  - Priority issues are: (1) developing measures, instruments and funds in function of equitable financing of climate policies, (2) stronger focus on inequality and how it can be reduced, (3) strengthening rights with regard to energy, water, mobility and internet. (Steunpunt)

- o European legislators should pay more systematic attention to inclusiveness. This includes "e-society" and digitalisation in general. People should always have the option of services that are not digital. Even for specific measures, e.g. the ban on plastic straws, the possible impact on people with disabilities should always be considered. There should also be more forums for the exchange of good practices between member states. (BDF)
  - o For SDG 1 and SDG 13, the Social Climate Fund is a good instrument in principle. The key is to ensure that that fund reaches those people who have low income, live in poorly insulated housing and in regions where there is little public transport. (ATD)
  - o For SDG 10. there is a need to strengthen the fight against discrimination based on socio-economic status. The FRA can contribute to this end. (ATD)

What key messages would you like to see in the VNR?

- The organisations have some suggestions:
  - o A strong focus on 'leave no one behind'. (BDF)
  - o The importance of a just transition, with a focus on equitable financing of climate policies. (Steunpunt)
  - o The importance of better monitoring inequalities and Matthew effects in our society. Special attention is needed for non-take-up of rights. (Support point)
  - o A choice of ex ante and ex post analysis of policy measures, with participation of people in poverty. (Steunpunt)
  - o The urgency of thinking and acting in a long-term perspective. Measures for people in poverty are too often provisional. There is a need for a more systemic policy. (ATD)
  - o Greater attention and recognition of the contributions of all - including those who are often ignored - to the SDGs. (ATD)
  - o Better use of the tools that already exist to act in a more participatory and coherent way. For the realisation of SDG 1, the existing cooperation agreement is a good basis. (ATD)

Editors: Jan Mertens, Fabrice Dehoux en Chris Schuurmans (FRDO-CFDD)